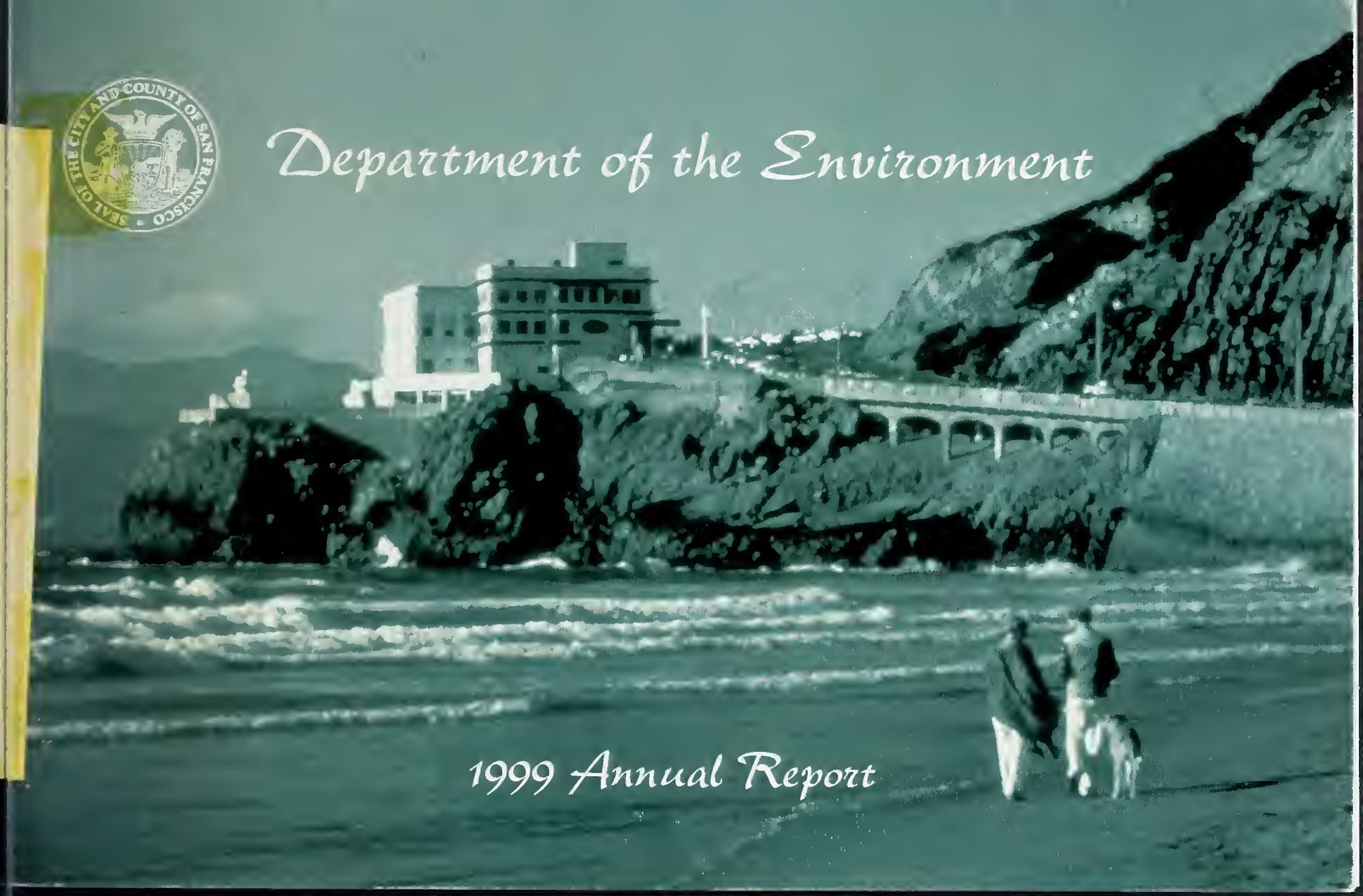

Department of the Environment
1999 Annual Report



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Department of the Environment

1999 Annual Report

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City and County of San Francisco



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

The science of ecology teaches us that everything is connected, and that by taking good care of the environment, the environment takes care of us. For example, if we want healthy fish in the Bay, we can't release toxic mercury or dioxins into the water. If we want to breathe clean air, we have to reduce the amount of pollution and emissions that we create.

Our city functions like a natural ecosystem. Our citizens are wonderfully diverse, and individual City departments such as Public Works, Solid Waste, and Environmental Health Services provide services that each is uniquely suited to deliver. We have parks and waterfront, streets and buildings, social networks, neighborhood associations and grassroots groups that work together to create the San Francisco that is loved the world over.

But, if San Francisco is going to sustain balance and diversity, we need the people, the City government and the environment to work together. That's where the Department of the Environment comes in. One of our most important functions is to bring citizens and community groups together with City departments to develop solutions to neighborhood and regional environmental problems.

Our fair City is up to the challenge. The citizens of the Bay Area are among the most environmentally minded you'll find anywhere, and judging from the calls our office receives, we San Franciscans are not only concerned about our quality of life, but we want to make things happen.

In 1995, the citizens of San Francisco voted to create a Department of the Environment to effectively address and publicize local environmental issues. We opened our doors in

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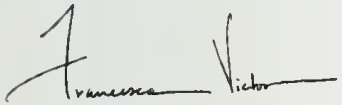
October 1996 and immediately made remarkable strides, including setting up a low-impact pest management program for city gardeners. But, 1999 has been our most productive year to date.

Supported by a Board of Supervisors' ordinance that requires City buildings to use energy and resources wisely, the Department of the Environment launched the Resource-efficient Building Program to make sure that the City develops and constructs its municipal buildings with the least possible impact on the environment. We also launched a public information program called Environmental Information, Referral and Outreach Services — with the catchy acronym ENVIROS — to raise awareness of local environmental issues and to create a central source for City environmental information.

To meet these demands, the Department of the Environment increased from four to seven full time staff, and our budget grew approximately 116% from $300,000 to $650,000. This increased funding came not a moment too soon. It enabled us to establish a solid foundation for programs that will further serve to maintain our quality of life and to preserve our unique ecosystem.

With your support and continued involvement, we will continue to work hard to protect San Francisco's extraordinary environment and to ensure that the incredible life San Franciscans enjoy in the present will still be here in the future.

To San Francisco's continued beauty and environmental health!



Francesca Vietor
Director

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The Department of the Environment's mission is to improve, enhance and preserve the environment and to promote San Francisco's long-term environmental sustainability.

The citizens of San Francisco voted to create the Department of the Environment in 1995.



The department started operation in October 1996, with responsibilities including:

- Ensuring that environmental policy-making and practices are integrated into municipal operations.
- Creating a system within the city to implement the sustainability plan and environmental programs.
- Reviewing and making recommendations on proposed City policies regarding their conformity with long-term plans for environmental sustainability.
- Increasing visibility of local environmental issues.
- Coordinating the work of various city environmental agencies for increased effectiveness.
- Creating a location for the public's interaction with the City on environmental issues.
- Establishing a body to represent and publicize San Francisco's environmental efforts in regional, national and international contexts.
- Providing public education and outreach on environmental issues.

- Investigating and making recommendations to all City agencies regarding operations and functions with particular attention to:
- solid waste management and recycling;
- environmental inspection;
- hazardous and toxic materials issues;
- urban forestry;
- energy and natural resources;
- habitat restoration;
- Administering programs focused on environmental priorities and issues, including:
 - Integrated Pest Management Program (IPM);
 - Resource-Efficient Building Program (REB);
 - Environmental Information, Referral and Outreach Services (ENVIROS)



The Department's duties are to:

- Produce and regularly update an assessment of the City's environmental condition;
- Produce and regularly update plans for the long-term environmental sustainability of San Francisco;
- Conduct public education and outreach to the community on environmental issues; and
- Manage the environmental programs, duties, and functions assigned to it.

REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

The City and the People Working Together

The Department of the Environment's greatest successes of 1999 were achieved by working in concert with other City departments and with citizen organizations.

In September, in order to protect the Great Highway, sections of Ocean Beach needed to be rebuilt before winter storms hit. A proposal calling for "revetment," or reinforcing the beach with boulders, would have changed irreversibly the natural habitat for fish and seabirds. Revetment would also have created a hazard to beach users and surfers, and meant the loss of yet another precious section of sandy Ocean Beach. Instead, working with the Department of Public Works, the Friends of Ocean Beach, Surfrider Foundation and other citizen groups the City decided to use a new technique called "sand nourishment," which infuses the eroded beach with tons of new sand. This would keep the beach a healthy ecosystem for all of its constituencies, both human and animal.



Photo:Alan Hopkins

Proposing sand nourishment to City policy makers allowed the Department of the Environment to fulfill one of its primary charter mandates, to investigate and make recommendations on habitat restoration.

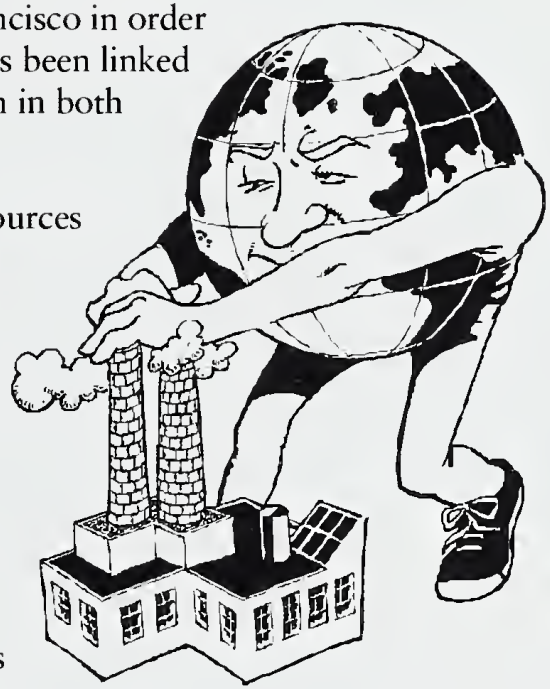
The Department of the Environment will continue coordinating efforts with other City departments in 2000, and will include neighborhood organizations in decision making on future environmental projects.

Policies to Protect Public Health

The Department of the Environment provides expert advice to the Board of Supervisors, which can result in new City legislation to protect the environmental quality of the Bay Area.

Dioxin

In March, the Board of Supervisors approved a resolution establishing dioxin pollution as a high priority for immediate action for the City & County of San Francisco in order to restore water, air and total environmental quality. Dioxin pollution has been linked to immune system impairment, birth defects and reproductive dysfunction in both men and women.



The resolution called for convening a regional task force to identify the sources of local dioxin pollution, including sources from city practices. The task force will develop dioxin pollution prevention strategies and make recommendations on reducing dioxin emissions.

The Board of Supervisors also resolved that the City should aim to reduce dioxins through the selective purchasing of goods and supplies. To that end, the Department of the Environment worked with the City's Purchasing Department to insure that the City buys paper free of dioxin-producing chlorine bleaches.

This important measure to improve the quality of life in the Bay Area was cosponsored by Supervisors Gavin Newsom, Leslie Katz, Mark Leno, Sue Bierman, Michael Yaki, Amos Brown, Tom Ammiano, Mabel Teng and Alicia Becerril.

Mercury

In June the Board of Supervisors worked with the Department of the Environment to pass a resolution limiting mercury use in the City. The resolution, introduced by Supervisor Mark Leno and passed unanimously by the Board of Supervisors, urges all City agencies and departments, and all medical facilities within San Francisco to eliminate mercury in order to protect and preserve human and environmental health.



As a result of that landmark resolution, none of the City-managed hospitals or clinics, including SF General and Laguna Honda Hospital, use mercury thermometers any longer.

Mercury is a persistent and toxic pollutant that accumulates in the environment and in the food chain, and is dangerous to humans. Mercury can neither be destroyed by combustion nor biological degradation. It evaporates readily and travels long distances in the atmosphere, causing local, regional and global pollution. When disposed of improperly, mercury can end up in the Bay; when incinerated, heavy metal vapors go into the air, come back down in rain, and add to Bay pollution. The EPA has listed mercury as a problem pollutant in San Francisco Bay

DEPARTMENT PROGRAMS

The three primary programs of the Department of the Environment are management of the City's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program, implementation of the Resource-Efficient Building (REB)Ordinance and Program and administration of the Environmental Information, Referral and Outreach Services (ENVIROS) program.

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

Overview of the Problem

The City and County of San Francisco manages a wide variety of pests, including insects, rodents and other animals, plant diseases, weeds, and germs. The most common approach to managing these pests in recent decades has been the use of pesticides of varying toxicity and hazard to public health.



Pesticide use in public spaces creates the potential for significant public exposure, particularly to children. Children are more vulnerable to the impacts of pesticides because they are likely to be exposed more often, through behavior such as putting their hands in their mouths and rolling around on the grass. Children have small, rapidly developing bodies that are more susceptible to chemical impact than are adults. In addition, indoor application of spray pesticides can create discomfort in office staff and lead to harmful reactions in chemically sensitive individuals.

Overview of the IPM Program



San Francisco's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) ordinance, passed in October 1996, commits the city to a pest management approach on its own property that minimizes the use of toxic chemicals and gets rid of pests by methods that pose a lower risk to public and environmental health.

San Francisco's pesticide practices have come a long way in the last three years. All of the most dangerous pesticides were banned for city use at the beginning of 1997 and for tenants on city property at the beginning of 1998. By January 1, 2000, only those chemicals considered as "reduced risk" and consistent with an IPM program may be used on City property.

The existing IPM ordinance was reviewed in 1999 by the program's Technical Advisory Committee, the City Attorney's office, and other involved City departments to consolidate the IPM program under the Department of the Environment, and create more practical implementation. This has resulted in streamlined coordination and oversight, as well as significant reduction in the use of all classes of pesticides.

In an effort to make the program easier for city departments to implement, the Department of the Environment, with input from community groups and IPM experts, compiled a list of over 100 pesticide products currently in use. The Department then commissioned a scientific review by the Washington Toxics Coalition, who recently performed a similar project for the City of Seattle, to determine the human and environmental impact of each product. In a process managed by Department of the Environment, if certain chemicals are found not to pose significant risks to human health and the environment, they are allowed as part of the IPM. Chemicals that pose significant potential harm will be prohibited.

The Department of the Environment worked closely in 1999 with the Department of Parks and Recreation, one of the heaviest users of chemical pesticides, to identify all pesticide products that need to be removed from its central warehouse. The Department of the Environment coordinated the legal and timely removal of these products with the Hazardous Waste Management Program. This ongoing project ensured that the worst of the chemicals were removed from City storerooms, and would not be used inadvertently. The IPM program is funded by allocations from MUNI, San Francisco International Airport, Port of San Francisco, Department of Public Works, Public Utilities Commission, Department of Public Health, and the Recreation and Parks Department – the seven City entities that are the heaviest "users" of pesticides – for a total implementation cost of $125,300.

The Department of the Environment has also conducted extensive outreach to these departments, making sure each is trained in the proper use of chemical pesticides and techniques, with specific targeted trainings for the PUC and Recreation and Park Department. The Department of the Environment coordinates the activities of the IPM Technical Advisory Committee, and takes responsibility for overall program issues that do not fall logically within the domain of any particular agency, including budgeting, human resources, reviewing citywide professional services contracts, community outreach and data collection protocols.



In the past year, The Department of the Environment has established systems to:

- Provide general oversight;
- Assist other Departments with drafting IPM plans and monitoring implementation;
- Bring city agencies into compliance and collect data on pesticide use and program cost;
- Review implementation plans submitted by all City departments;

- Assist each department with ordinance compliance;
- Educate all agencies about pest deterrence techniques;
- Coordinate outreach efforts between City departments to promote IPM techniques to City residents and businesses;
- Report to the Commission on the Environment and the Board of Supervisors on the success of the program;
- Develop, monitor and propose for adoption by the Commission a "reduced-risk" list of pesticides for the City, and ensure Departmental compliance;
- Assist with the selection of an appropriate pest control contractor for the City;
- Identify reduced risk pest control strategies for consideration by City staff;
- Coordinate annual IPM conference;
- Develop educational displays and outreach exhibits.



For a city with 35,000 employees and nearly 80 separate departments, making the shift to IPM has been a noble challenge. City gardeners, facilities managers, custodians, pest management contractors, and even office staff have been exposed to an entirely new way of thinking about pesticides. For office staff and building managers, increased emphasis is put on sanitation and facilities maintenance. For people involved in landscape management, IPM options are myriad. The Department of the Environment emphasizes education and developing less-harmful alternatives to toxic chemicals, such as mulching and hand-weeding; employing mechanical rather than chemical means of killing weeds, such as the use of flame and natural predators; and planting foliage with habits suitable to San Francisco's climate in order to increase resistance to pest infestation.



Background

Resource-efficient or "Green" buildings make both environmental and economic sense. Buildings are often expensive, wasteful of precious natural resources and harmful to both workers and the environment. In the U.S. alone, buildings use 30% of our total energy. Five billion gallons of water per day are used just to flush toilets. Typical commercial construction generates 2-2.5 pounds of solid waste per square foot of floor space.

According to WorldWatch Institute, construction, demolition and operation of buildings collectively consume up to 40% of the earth's energy and other natural resources. New design practices, technology, and materials can significantly reduce the resources used in the construction and operation of buildings and their cost of operation.

In collaboration with the Solid Waste Department, Water Department, Bureau of Energy Conservation, Bureau of Architecture and other city agencies, the Department of the Environment has developed a Resource-Efficient Building (REB) program to shift the city's building practices to a more sustainable, resource-efficient model.

"In our community, we think globally and act locally."

Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, 1999

What are Resource-Efficient Buildings?



Resource-efficient buildings are structures designed, constructed, renovated and operated in an environmentally and energy-efficient manner. Resource-efficient buildings exhibit a high level of environmental, economic and engineering performance, including:

- Energy efficiency and conservation;
- Improved indoor air quality;
- Resource and material efficiency;
- Occupant health and productivity;
- Proximity to public transportation;
- Improved environmental quality including air, water, land, limited resources and ecosystems.

"The greatest environmental challenge of the new century is global warming. The scientists tell us the 1990s were the hottest decade of the entire millennium. If we fail to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases, deadly heat waves and droughts will become more frequent, coastal areas will flood, and economies will be disrupted. That is going to happen, unless we act."

President William Jefferson Clinton,
Stote of the Union Address, Jan. 27, 2000

Resource-efficient buildings save resources and reduce energy costs while improving worker productivity due to higher satisfaction with the workplace. Some national studies suggest that resource-efficient buildings can improve worker productivity by as much as sixteen percent by reducing the number of sick days and improving attitude.

Resource-efficient buildings avoid using toxic PVC plastics and products that produce greenhouse gasses, thereby helping to stabilize the Earth's climate.

The Resource-Efficient Building (REB) Ordinance

The City and County of San Francisco enacted the REB Ordinance in July 1999. The ordinance requires standards of resource-efficiency in all city buildings and calls for a series of pilot projects to demonstrate state-of-the-art green building technology.

The Department's Role

The Department of the Environment is responsible for coordinating and implementing this far-reaching program. The Department's role in this program includes:

- Developing goals, criteria and strategies to maximize city-wide resource-efficient building design and operations;
- Developing and coordinating green building training programs for city employees;
- Convening an interdepartmental task force that assists in implementing the program;
- Coordinating the REB program among city departments;
- Assessing the efficacy of REB Program and Pilot Projects on both environmental and economic grounds;
- Developing a resource library for the general public and providing information to encourage the adoption of resource-efficient building guidelines in the private sector;
- Making policy recommendations to the Board of Supervisors for additional resource-efficient building requirements.



Change is already happening

Despite the relative youth of the ordinance, green building techniques and energy saving measures are already taking effect. Figures from the City's Bureau of Energy Conservation indicate that energy-efficiency measures have saved the City over $6,000,000 to date, and have reduced greenhouse gas emissions each year by nearly 80,000 tons, the equivalent of keeping 4,600 automobiles off of the streets.

City construction and renovation projects are incorporating resource-efficient measures. Construction debris from municipal building and demolition projects is being diverted

Green Building in Action

A look at just one current city project, the Moscone Convention Center expansion, includes several green features that meet and exceed compliance with REB ordinance.

- The project uses adhesives, sealant, paints and coatings that are low in volatile organic compounds (VOC). This eliminates unnecessary health problems for building occupants who inhale VOC emissions, and can reduce the building's impact on air quality and damage to the earth's atmosphere.
- The gypsum board, tape and taping compound used in the project contains post-consumer recycled content.
- To support the local economy – the very essence of sustainability – the project specifies use of locally fabricated materials when feasible.
- The project uses maximum levels of insulation to reduce the energy needed for cooling and heating the building.
- Window glass with a thin metal coating reflects radiant heat back to its source. This green technology is 72 % more effective than double-glazed windows.

from landfill, and the materials are being recycled or reused. New buildings and remodeling of existing buildings are being designed to provide adequate recycling space for the building's occupants. Toilets and showerheads in municipal facilities are being converted to low flow. Exit signs, fluorescent fixtures, and exterior light fixtures are being replaced with energy-saving technologies. Mercury-containing fluorescent light tubes are being removed from public buildings. Indoor air quality is being taken into consideration when specifying products and materials, such as paint or carpets.

REB Pilot Program

A special pilot program, outlined in the REB ordinance, will serve as a test-bed for future performance standards for all municipal buildings.

Working in collaboration with client city agencies and a special multi-disciplinary task force, the Department of the Environment will work with the City's Bureau of Architecture to design and monitor up to seven new buildings and major renovations over the next two to three years in order to demonstrate green building techniques.

As it works through each pilot project, the inter-departmental task force will develop high-performance design guidelines for all future municipal construction, and will produce a means to assess the environmental and economic benefits of green building features. A process will be established to ensure that each pilot public building and its systems function as efficiently as possible.

Pilot Projects shall be selected and designed in order to demonstrate innovative construction techniques, building materials, landscaping techniques and other building systems addressing the following pilot demonstration goals:

- Improved energy efficiency;
- Consideration of energy generation by passive solar, or other renewable sources;
- Improved water conditions;
- Healthy indoor air quality;
- Adequate storage and collection of recyclables;
- Environmentally sensitive landscaping, including drought-resistant native plants and designs for landscape maintenance using integrated pest management;
- Procurement of building materials with minimal impact on indoor air quality maximized recycled content and future recycling potential;
- Building design features that discourage pest infestation, such as sloping ledges to discourage pigeons and easy-to-clean floor surfaces to discourage dust mites and other insects;
- Stormwater management;
- Water pollution prevention; and
- Wastewater recycling.



Green Building in Action (cont.)

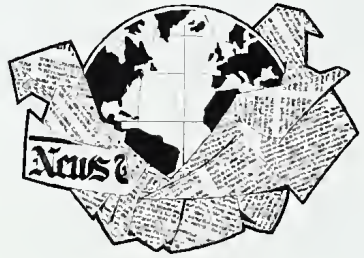
- Materials used in the project are constructed with low energy demands.
- No tropical hardwoods are used, taking the burden off of valuable rainforest ecosystems; wood that is certified to be harvested in a sustainable manner is used whenever possible.
- Special emphasis is put on specifying long life, low-maintenance materials.
- Before people occupy the building, furniture and finishes will be allowed to release any toxic fumes, a process called "off gassing."
- Construction and demolition debris is being diverted from landfill and reused or recycled.

Independent Evaluation of City Environmental services

In 1999 the Municipal Fiscal Advisory Council (MFAC), an independent business advisory group, conducted an assessment of San Francisco's environmental services and the agencies that deliver them. The MFAC study concluded that the Department of the Environment would be more effective if its primary responsibilities including coordinating city environmental services, providing information regarding best practices to the environmental community and performing effective outreach and education via www.sfenvironment.com, and other collateral materials.

Additionally, MFAC recommended that the Department "integrate the messages and services of all City & County of San Francisco Departments to create a public awareness of city-wide environmental progress" and further, that the Department "accurately identify and devise methods for reaching its target audience." As a result of MFAC's recommendations the ENVIROS program was established.

ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION, REFERRAL AND OUTREACH SERVICE (ENVIROS)



The Environmental Information, Referral and Outreach Service – with the apt acronym ENVIROS – is the public outreach arm of the Department of the Environment. ENVIROS has a three-fold function. It provides clear, precise, objective, ongoing information about the condition of San Francisco's environment to the public and policy-makers; provides environmental informational and educational resources to a wide variety of San Francisco audiences; and strives to motivate every resident and visitor to act as good stewards of the City.

Information with a capital "I"

The ENVIROS program was established at the Department of the Environment in 1999.

ENVIROS is the first resource for people who want to find out what the City is doing to protect the environment. Each year ENVIROS handles scores of questions from other city departments and from the public. ENVIROS is responsible for providing expert information to the media, City agencies, the Board of Supervisors and the public.

In 1999 ENVIROS created a series of fact sheets to answer commonly asked questions about environmental issues vital to residents of the City. These are available at the Department of the Environment office, and are distributed at numerous street fairs, events and functions, in an effort to get the information out to the people who want and

need it most. Some of the topics covered include dioxin pollution in the Bay, how to save energy while saving money on your utility bill, and how to deal with common garden and household pests.

The Department of the Environment's website – www.sfenvironment.com – contains the latest departmental and Environment Commission news and archives, easy-to-read fact sheets about a wealth of environmental topics, and useful links to city agencies and Bay Area environmental non-profit organizations. Website traffic grew by nearly 600 percent between January and December 1999, with a total of over 24,000 individual requests for information made over the year. Plans for 2000 include aggressively promoting www.sfenvironment.com to better acquaint San Franciscans with ENVIROS and the resources available to them.

ENVIROS also produces an informative guide to San Francisco environmental services, including programs run by the City & County of San Francisco, as well as local environmental groups. This easy-to-use booklet is arranged by commonsense topics including air quality, hazardous materials, landmark preservation, policy and planning, recycling, water quality and more. Plans for 2000 include updating this vital resource directory, and transferring the information to www.sfenvironment.com.

Other regular Department of the Environment publications include the annual report, and an assessment of the state of the environment in San Francisco. ENVIROS is responsible for fulfilling the mandate in San Francisco's City Charter (section 4.118) which states that "The Department of the Environment shall regularly produce an assessment of San Francisco's environmental condition...The Commission shall conduct public education and outreach to the community on environmental issues."

"In the next fifty to one-hundred years, sea levels around the world are projected to rise three feet. The impact on San Francisco could be devastating. A three-foot rise in the Bay would flood property worth forty-eight billion dollars. Airports in San Francisco and Oakland, Treasure Island, Mission Bay, the Giant's new ballpark, parts of Interstate 80 and Highway 101, railroad tracks and sewage treatment plants, marinas and harbors would be partly or totally under water. The time to act is now!"

Mayor Willie L. Brown, Jr.



The "R" is for "referral."

ENVIROS maintains an active list of environmental services provided by the City, and refers callers to the proper agency if the problem or issue cannot be handled by Department of the Environment. This saves the callers time and frustration, and helps them through the maze that city government can sometimes be. The Department of the Environment keeps information and publications from City environmental programs available to the public at the Department of the Environment office with a wealth of material including such important information as the history of the Hetch Hetchy water system, tips on hazardous waste disposal, recycling guidance, and more.

"O" is for Outreach

Part of being an effective information source is letting folks know that your service is available. The Department of the Environment partnered with regional and city agencies to reach a broad range of citizens at special events around the City, such as holding community meetings in Bayview Hunters Point and the Mission District to hear the environmental concerns of neighborhood residents.

The Department of the Environment hosted a special Earth Day breakfast on April 22 at which Mayor Willie L. Brown, Jr. met with over seventy representatives of the Bay Area environmental community. The mayor took the opportunity to voice his support for Department of the Environment education programs, and to express his concern over global warming.

The Future

The ENVIROS program has big plans for 2000, including setting up a public information center, or Ecocenter, with interactive environmental displays. This will provide San Francisco residents and visitors with a fun and easy way to learn environmental do's and don'ts. Part of the Ecocenter outreach includes planning and producing presentations for schools, colleges, volunteer organizations and other groups, and co-sponsoring environmental events, conferences, fairs, and clean-up drives with other groups and agencies. In addition to producing original research on hot local environmental issues and translating these studies into several languages to better serve the diverse Bay Area community, ENVIROS will develop avenues of distribution to get this information out to effected communities. The ENVIROS program will also establish a network of relationships with other agencies and organizations to provide information on a variety of environmental issues, and will work to develop and establish volunteer and internship programs to further engage the public.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT STAFF

Francesca Vietor, Director
Appointed by Mayor Willie L. Brown, Jr.
April 1, 1999

Sraddha Mehta
Commission Secretary

Claudia Molina
Administrative Support

Debbie Raphael
Integrated Pest Management Coordinator

Ellen Rubinstein
Resource-efficient Building Coordinator

Tamara Shulman
Executive Secretary

Mark Westlund
Public Information Officer

Interns: Erwin Bonilla, Paul Carlisle, Wei-Chin Hou, Brenda Kong, Betty Lau, Dina Martinez, Colleen McDonald, Adrienne Priselac, Yana Thomspon, David White, Sarah Wright



From the Commission President

San Francisco is blessed with a stunning natural setting and some of the richest cultural amenities of any place in the world. That's why we live here, and that's why hundreds of thousands of people come to visit each year.

Perhaps it is because the Bay Area is so special that so many people realize we must do everything possible to be good stewards of our air, water and land. The earth has been uniquely good to San Franciscans, and it is our duty to do good by the earth in return.

Advocacy for the environment is part of our Bay Area history. This is where John Muir founded the Sierra Club in 1892, an organization that has grown into one of the largest, most forceful groups fighting to save wilderness in the country. San Francisco is also where David Brower, the arch druid of the environmental movement, chose to start his influential Friends of the Earth.

Environmentalists have been saying for years that we should think globally and act locally. When San Francisco acts locally, the world is watching. Part of being "the city that knows how" means setting the right example. The Commission on the Environment works to help the City set goals that other cities and governments look up to.

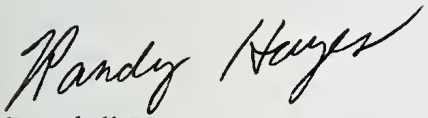
San Francisco is a leading city on curbing and eliminating dioxin pollution, and has an environmentally friendly program to manage pests that other cities want to duplicate. Our green building program promises to save the City money on energy bills while protecting our air and water by using low-impact materials. Our environmental leadership is setting new standards at home and abroad.

Department Director Francesca Vietor and I met with Oakland mayor Jerry Brown to coordinate environmental efforts of our neighboring cities, and we regularly work with cities in the South Bay and the Los Angeles area to help improve environmental quality throughout California. We are also planning internationally. Over the next years I look forward to working with cities in countries like Ecuador, Brazil, New Zealand and the Netherlands, which are committed to ecological sustainability, in order to impart some of our knowledge and bring back insights that we can use here at home.

Over all, the biggest challenge to our future is global warming. The polar icecaps will melt, ocean levels will rise and much of our beautiful Bay Area will be submerged under water unless we cut dramatically the emission of greenhouse gas that are turning our atmosphere into a toxic furnace. Most scientists agree that this is already happening.

Mayor Willie Brown, Jr. is deeply concerned about global warming and made it the focus of his 1999 Earth Day address. San Francisco is leading the way with its clean air assistance program, recycling and solid waste reduction programs, and commitment to Transit First.

I'm happy with the work we've done, but we must continue to move San Francisco into sustainability in the years to come, and make sure that we leave a healthy Bay Area to the generations to follow.



Randall Hayes
President, Commission on the Environment

"More than anything else, my study of the environment has led me to realize the extent to which our current public discourse is focused on the shortest of short-term values and encourages the American people to join us politicians in avoiding the most important issues and postponing the real difficult choices."

Vice President Al Gore
Earth in the Balance, 1992

COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The Commission on the Environment was established by the San Francisco's City Charter in 1995. The first Commission was appointed by Mayor Willie L. Brown, Jr. in October, 1996.

There are seven commissioners appointed by the mayor, each of whom serves a four-year term, at the mayor's pleasure.

- Randall Hayes, President
- Shelley Bradford-Bell, Vice President
- Rev. Sally Bingham
- Patricia Chang
- Rebecca Evans
- Parin Shah
- Robert K. Werbe

The commission sets policy for the Department of the Environment. In addition, it:

- Reviews and makes recommendations on any policy proposed for adoption by any City agency regarding conformity with the long-term plan for environmental sustainability, except for those regarding building and land use;
- Investigates and makes recommendations to all City agencies related to operations and functions;
- Conducts public education and outreach to the community on environmental issues.

Hearings on Environmental Topics

As part of its outreach role, the commission conducts a number of informational hearings on environmental topics. In 1999, these hearings included:

- How the City generates electrical power, and ways it might go greener;
- Environmentally preferable City purchasing;
- Environmental health, including toxic emissions and sport fish contamination;
- Integrated pest management;
- Neighborhood-specific topics in the Mission District and Bayview Hunters Point;
- Recycling;
- Resource efficiency;
- Sustainable economic development;
- Improved public transportation.



Additionally, The Commission hosted its first two neighborhood meetings: one at the Bayview Opera House Ruth Williams Memorial Theater in Bayview Hunter's Point, and one at the Mission Cultural Center in the Mission District. Neighborhood meetings provide an opportunity for the Commission to hear and respond to the community's environmental concerns.

Resolutions Passed on Environmental Issues

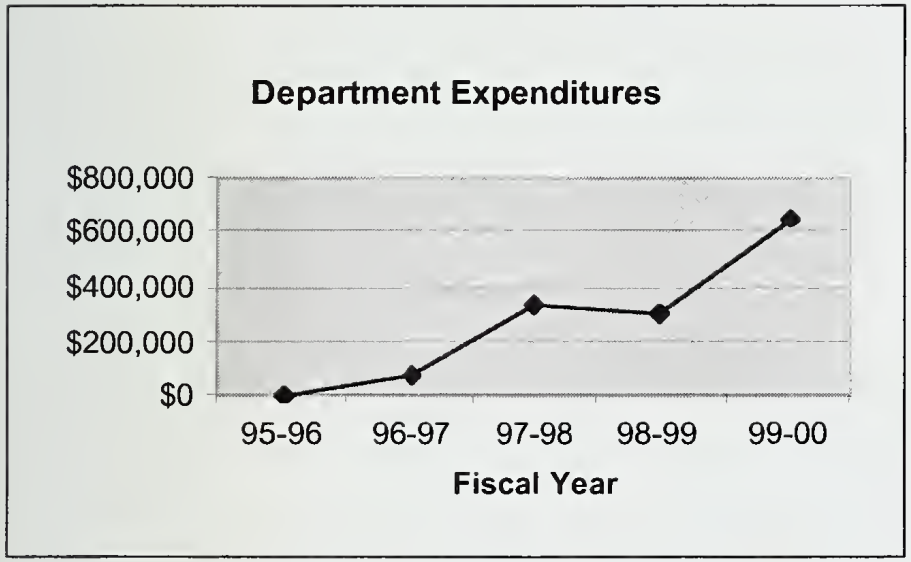
In its policy-making role, the commission addressed the following issues by resolution:

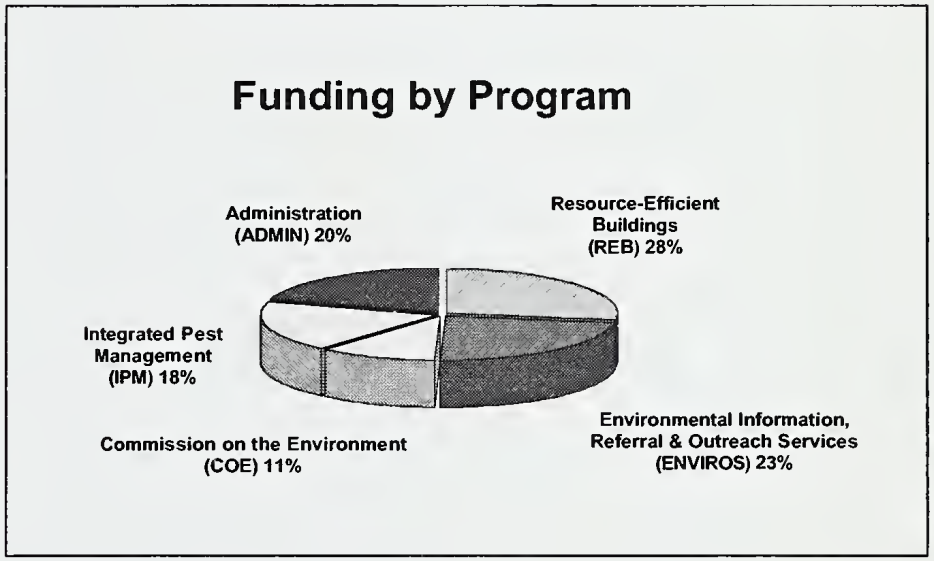
- Urging full and permanent funding for the U.S. Land and Water Conservation Fund
- Raising environmental concerns for military exercises in the Presidio
- Urging the inclusion of anti-microbial agents to the Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Ordinance
- Calling on Coca-Cola to use recycled plastic in its bottles
- Adopting Resource-Efficient Building guidelines
- Authorizing amendments to the Integrated Pest Management Ordinance and approving the Pesticide List 2000
- Urging the Retirement Board to divest from Occidental Petroleum
- Urging the elimination of dioxin pollution wherever possible

"To sustain an environment suitable for man, we must fight on a thousand battlegrounds. Despite all of our wealth and knowledge, we cannot create a redwood forest, a wild river, or a gleaming seashore."

President Lyndon Johnson,
Message to Congress, Feb. 23, 1966




Department Expenditures
$800,000
$600,000
$400,000
$200,000
$0
95-96
96-97
97-98
98-99
99-00
Fiscal Year


Funding by Program
Administration (ADMIN) 20%
Resource-Efficient Buildings (REB) 28%
Integrated Pest Management (IPM) 18%
Commission on the Environment (COE) 11%
Environmental Information, Referral & Outreach Services (ENVIROS) 23%

Notes:



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